



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Child Care Education 2007

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- According to the 2007 Child Care Fact Sheet from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 473,833 Georgia children under age six have all available parents in the paid labor force. Some form of child care is needed while those parents are at work.
- Child care that is high-quality, affordable, and accessible is not available to many Georgia parents needing it.
- Most child care in Georgia, and nationwide, is only of marginal or poor quality. High staff turnover, lack of provider training and experience, and low pay all contribute to low-quality child care.
- High-quality child care provides many benefits for young children, but is more expensive to administer, and parent fees tend to be higher.
- Child care is the third highest household expense for most families of young children, after only shelter and food. Many parents seek the least expensive source of care because they cannot afford higher quality care and/or do not understand that the quality of child care has direct effects on their child's development.

Research-based Solutions

- Children in high-quality child care settings are more likely to be emotionally secure, self-confident, better able to regulate aggression, and more advanced intellectually.
- High-quality care includes developmentally appropriate curriculum and caregivers who are sensitive and responsive to individual children's needs.
- Child care providers who understand children's growth and development tend to provide higher-quality care for young children.
- Child care providers who receive ongoing education and training in early childhood development are more likely to provide high-quality care.

Extension's Role

Extension helps ensure high-quality childcare by providing data driven or research based programming such as:

- Providing state-accepted training hours for child care providers.
- Coordinating local and regional training events and conferences for child care providers.
- Providing basic-level self-study courses for beginning child care providers who cannot attend in-class training sessions.
- Providing print and online information on typical child development for child care providers.
- Providing consumer information to help parents identify and select high-quality child care, including the "Child Care Quality Matters!" web site (www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/ccqm/index.php).
- Collaborating with employers, child care resource and referral agencies, and other community leaders to ensure the availability of consistent, high quality child care as a vital part of community infrastructure.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem in 2007

- Extension provided 16,552 educational contact hours to 7,240 child care providers in 2007. Extension is one of the largest sources of the required community-based education for child care providers in many rural Georgia counties, and costs approximately one-half the average cost of private sector training (2005 data).

- Self-study courses were administered to 21 child care providers in 2007.
- Extension collaborated with numerous organizations, including child care resource and referral agencies, technical colleges, and the Georgia Association on Young Children, to ensure that high-quality community-based training is available for child care providers in all parts of the state.
- Extension is an active partner in grant projects to develop training resources, train trainers, and support ongoing professional development for child care providers. For example, Extension is the co-leader and primary content expert for Better Brains for Babies, which prepares trainers to teach child care providers and other audiences about early brain development.
- Over 20,000 individuals were estimated to have been reached through news articles and newsletters related to childcare quality produced by Cooperative Extension.

Impact on Georgians

- Ninety-six percent (98%) of the participants in the child care trainings offered by Extension stated that the program was helpful. The majority of participants who were not already practicing recommended behaviors reported being more likely to do so. For example, 100% of those who don't already read aloud to children plan to do so; 92% of those who don't already include math materials in activities such as dramatic play plan to begin doing so; 80% of those who don't already do so plan to ask questions that encourage children to think about math concepts; and 78% of those who don't already encourage children to explore and experiment plan to do so.
- A comparison of pre and post-test results indicate that care providers who participated in the child care self-study courses increased their average test scores from 83% to 89%.
- Through a 2006-2007 collaborative child care initiative between Smart Start Georgia and Extension in Moscookee County, 380 training hours and 3,600 technical assistance hours were provided to the 40 child care facilities including 58 employees receiving training on a literacy curriculum called SPARK. On-site evaluators reported that participants adhered to each of the 31 teaching strategies and behaviors promoted through SPARK an average 85% of the time.

Economic Impact on Georgians

- The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension provided close to 12,000 hours of high-quality, low-cost child care training that child care providers can use to fulfill their required continuing education. On average, this training through Cooperative Extension costs \$3.97 less per hour than training provided in the private sector. Therefore, in 2007, the total value of Cooperative Extension child care training in terms of savings to child care providers was \$47,640.

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